



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
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DIVERSITY@Work

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Q&A: VA SECRETARY PRINCIPI TALKS DIVERSITY

Secretary Anthony J. Principi is serious about workplace diversity. He explains why in this issue's Q&A.

Q: How do you view VA's diversity efforts as helping to deliver services and benefits to America's 25 million veterans and their families?

PRINCIPI: Our mission to serve the Nation's veterans guides everything we do at VA. We must recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce to provide high-quality service to veterans and their families. That priority is reflected in the Enabling Goals of our 2001-2006 Strategic Plan For Employees. We're firmly committed to building a workforce that reflects the diversity of those we serve. Veterans are more diverse than 10, 15, or 25 years ago. VA's workforce must mirror that population if we're going to deliver the services and benefits they deserve properly.

Q: What diversity roles do you envision for VA managers?

PRINCIPI: I envision them taking a more proactive role, helping to establish and meet diversity competencies, spearheading new initiatives, and supporting the new *One VA Diversity Business Council* I intend to establish later this year. Ultimately, managers will be responsible for VA meeting its diversity goals. The Deputy Secretary and I will be reviewing our progress on an ongoing basis.

Upcoming issue: More from Secretary Principi on diversity at VA.



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CELEBRATE!

Two Special Observances on Tap

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday in January and Black History Month during February.

It's important to recognize the many contributions that Black Americans have made to our country, especially in military service. Colin Powell and Crispus Attucks are well-known icons

of patriotism. But are you familiar with Cathay Williams, the only known female Buffalo Soldier? To learn more, visit <http://afroamhistory.about.com> (click on Biographies).

For information on the National Black Special Emphasis Program, contact Program Manager Wanda J. Jones at (202) 273-7388.

Bookmarks

- National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
www.nafeo.org
- National Women's History Project
www.nwhp.org
- Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc.
www.leap.org
- League of United Latin American Citizens
www.lulac.org
- The Access Board
www.access-board.gov
- American Indian Higher Education Consortium
www.aihec.org

FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use



Salute to Hospitalized Vets



Dr. Trowell-Harris



Mr. Nesby

For More Info

To learn more about Executive Orders, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo and click on the White House Initiatives link.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Actor Gerald McRaney ("Major Dad") will chair VA's 2002 National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, an annual recognition of men and women who once served our Nation's military.

This year, the campaign will be marked by community activities at VA health care centers and clinics across the country during National Salute Week, February 10-16. In addition, McRaney will serve as national spokesman for the nearly 100,000 volunteers who serve veterans in VA facilities. For more information, visit the Voluntary Service Web page at www.va.gov/volunteer.

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

* Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris is the new Director of VA's Center for Women Veterans, serving as primary advisor to Secretary Principi on programs and issues relating to women veterans.

Dr. Trowell-Harris served as Director of the VA Office of Inspector General's Washington, DC, Healthcare Inspections Regional Office prior to this appointment. She served 38 years in the U.S. Air Force/Air National Guard, retiring last year as Major General. To learn more about the VA's Center for Women Veterans, visit www.va.gov/womenvet.

* Charles W. Nesby has been named Director of VA's Center for Minority Veterans. As Director, he is the principal advisor to the Secretary on programs and policies affecting minority vets. Nesby, a former Navy captain and air commander, is the son of Charles Nesby, Sr., a Tuskegee Airman of World War II. For more information on the Center for Minority Veterans, go to www.va.gov/minority.

We want to hear from you! Submit news of your facility's special events, awards, and staff announcements to dmeeo@mail.va.gov.

SPOTLIGHT

Executive Order 12876: Historically Black Colleges and Universities

White House Executive Order (EO) 12876, signed in 1993, strengthens the capacity of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to provide quality higher education, develop human potential, and increase their opportunities to participate in and benefit from Federal programs.

VA fully supports this Order by entering into grants, contracts, and co-operative agreements with HBCUs. In FY 2000, VA awarded more than \$34

million to them. VA also files yearly plans and reports with the Department of Education and with OMB to map its HBCU strategies and successes.

Like other EO's, 12876 is implemented and supported by a Board of Advisors and White House Initiative staff, who work to ensure that these schools are model institutions of teaching, learning, and service. For more information on HBCUs, visit www.nafeo.org/about_nafeo.htm.

INSIDE STORY

Get Your Programs Up and Running

You've just been tapped to manage a Special Emphasis Program at your facility. Perhaps you've been performing the job as collateral duty for months or even years. Where do you turn for guidance on jump-starting your program?

According to National Black Special Emphasis Program Manager Wanda Jones, people often call on DM&EEO for help. Says Jones, "We know what SEP managers are going through. They're handed new responsibilities without the tools or training to get the job done sometimes." She shares questions and offers advice that may help you better manage your programs and understand people's roles.

As an SEP Manager, to whom do I report and what are my responsibilities?

At field facilities, the SEPM is usually a collateral-duty position that reports to the EEO Manager. Your responsibility is to make managers aware of

their diversity responsibilities and help them identify employment problems and solutions affecting women, minorities, and people with disabilities. You'll also monitor progress toward employment goals.

I'm the Women's Program Manager at my facility, but I haven't been provided training to manage my program effectively. What should I do?

Your EEO Manager should provide such training. If that's not the case, discuss training options with regional or VA Central Office EEO Managers.

How important is managerial support?

Program support—such as formal training, resources, and policy statements—is vital to SEPMS. In February, DM&EEO will offer a useful online checklist that addresses managerial support. Bookmark our site!

Have additional program questions? Get in touch with our National SEP Managers via www.va.gov/dmeeo/specialemphasisprog.htm (select a program).

SPECIAL EMPHASIS

Miami VAMC: Student Career Experience Program a Win-Win Solution



Here's a lesson in succession planning: Head back to school to recruit a diverse workforce.

Miami VAMC EEO Manager Janice Costa and former Health Systems Specialist Terry Atienza spoke with *D@W* about an innovative student co-op program in use at the facility. According to Atienza, who is now Chief Operations Officer of the Northern Arizona VA Health Care System, the major goals of the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) are to enhance succession planning, strengthen participating college programs, and increase opportunities for minorities and women. The Miami SCEP is a best practice, he affirms, that's also a beneficial, cost-effective way to address clinical and administrative support functions while building healthy communities.

Here's how it works: Participating graduate students work part-time at the facility, generally as technicians, clerks, and assistants in studies-

related positions ranging from GS-4 to GS-7. This enables VA to use the students' skills to improve health care delivery while grooming them for progressively responsible jobs after graduation. And here's the bonus—they can be selected for permanent positions without competition for 120 days following graduation.

The Miami facility has used the program for nearly 7 years. In FY 2001, 9 students participated in the program and 3 were converted to career-conditional appointments. More hires are expected this year. "They've proven to be reliable, skilled employees and valuable role models for VA staff," says Janice Costa.

According to Costa, "Diversity has an official role in the succession planning angle of our SCEP," one that dovetails with written facility policy that emphasizes the ongoing development and advancement of underrepresented groups in occupational categories identified as showing imbalance.

For more information on the program, contact Janice Costa at (305) 324-4455.

Diversity@Work

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COMING SOON

- * More Q&A with VA Secretary Principi
- * Celebrate Women's History Month
- * How to plan a special observance
- * Asian American/Pacific Islander Web links
- * Calendar updates
- * More tips and tools

DM&EEO ONLINE

The DM&EEO Web site celebrates its 6-month milestone in February. We've come a long way under the guidance of Deputy Assistant Secretary Armando Rodriguez, but not content to rest on our laurels, we're redoubling efforts to offer lots more information and tools to help you promote workplace

diversity and enhance the employment of minorities, women, veterans, and people with disabilities. Here's a sampling of recent additions to our site:

- Online access to *Diversity@Work*
- Special observance pages
- *A Guide: Conducting Workforce Analysis*
- New 2002 Diversity Calendar

Bookmark our site; we're here to serve you!



2002 CALENDAR

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday

January 15 (observed: Jan. 21)

Black History Month

February

National Technical and Career Conference of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE)
Minneapolis, MN
February 5-10
(323) 725-3970
www.shpe.org

Black Engineer of the Year Awards Conference

Baltimore, MD
February 14-16
(410) 244-7101
www.blackengineer.com/events/index.shtml

Looking ahead:

Women's History Month

March

Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

May

Women's Equality Day

August 26

Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15-October 15

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October

To locate additional events and observances, visit our [Web site](#) and select the *Calendar* link.